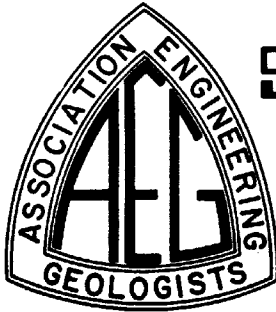


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SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SECTION

news letter

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Editor - 818-988-3786
C/O Oberne and Associates, Inc.
22715 Dolores St.,
Woodland Hills, California 91367

2550 BEVERLY BOULEVARD, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90057

ATTENTION DATE CHANGE

NOVEMBER MEETING

DATE: Wednesday, November 20, 1985

PLACE: Stevens Steak House
5332 Stevens Place
Commerce (T.G. 53 F2)

COST: \$13.00 (Tip included)

RESERVATIONS: Jeff Holt & Associates
805-522-5174
Please make reservations by noon on previous
friday.

TIME: 5:30 Social Hour
6:30 Dinner
7:30 AEG Business
8:00 Speaker
9:00 Section Affairs, if scheduled

SPEAKER: Jack Sheehan, consulting geologist, Cypress
California. Mr. Sheehan received a B.S.
degree from Oregon State University in 1953,
and an M.S. degree from U.C. Berkeley in
1956.

PLATE TECTONIC EVOLUTION OF THE
SAN ANDREAS FAULT SYSTEM IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
J.R. Sheehan

Plate Tectonic theory offers an explanation for the evolution of the San Andreas Fault system in southern California. Convergence of the North American Plate with the East Pacific Rise, resulting in the overriding of the East Pacific Rise south of the Mendocino Fracture Zone, has led to the development of a series of right-lateral wrench faults on the leading edge of the North American Plate. These faults began as transform faults connecting segments of the East Pacific Rise in the Gulf of California

Southwesterly offset of this faulting by the Sierra Nevada-Mojave massif has resulted in opening of the Santa Maria Basin and elevation of the Transverse Ranges. The Modern San Andreas Fault system in southern California is a composite of three offset transform faults -- the Elsinore-San Gabriel Fault, the San Jacinto Fault, and the San Andreas Fault south of Cajon Pass. Right-lateral offset on the modern San Andreas Fault system decreases to zero at the spreading ridge at the southeast corner of the Salton Sea.

Our thanks go to the 1985 Southern California Section AEG officers. These people extended a great deal of their time and energy on our behalf to make the organization work. There is an astonishing amount of preparation that must go into each monthly meeting and, as we are all aware, deadlines can be difficult to live with. Some of officers are continuing to work for the Association through 1986. So thanks to the following for a job well done:

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Vice Chairperson Gary Guacci
Secretary Steve Jensen
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Student Liaison David Grover

BULLETINS

Professor Martin Stout, CSULA, Member of State Registration Examination Committee, 213-224 3767--224-3388: " We've all heard (or made) comments... the registration exam was too hard, the questions were bad (ambiguous, not answerable, etc., etc.). You've also heard me ask for input for this exam. This is yet another request. I believe that the entire exam is incredibly stale--same questions asked in some dubious cyclic nature, but this is all entirely dependent on input from you. My request is for all of you who have taken the exam to come up with better problems--good examples from your own practice to make getting the questions together easier for you and also practical. We don't have any trouble with multiple choice questions, but there is a definite need for problem type questions. How about it??? I'll report back to you what the response is to this request."

Workshop at the University of Southern California, November 12-13, 1985: Future Directions in Evaluating Earthquake Hazards of Southern California, contact: William M. Brown III, U.S. Geological Survey, 345 Middlefield Road, Mail Stop 922, Menlo Park, CA 94025 415-856-7112, 415-323-8111 ext.2312, Please note that registration for this workshop was to close on October 15 but perhaps you can still make some arrangement.

Get your check book ready, membership dues are coming up. Dues will be \$13.00 and should be sent with the form (when I get it to put in the newsletter) to the new treasurer, Bob Zweigler.

The Los Angeles Basin Geological Society is having there annual fall field trip - 1985 - on November 16 & 17. Title: Ridge Basin and the San Andreas Fault System. Leader: Dr. John Crowell. The price is \$85.00 (deduct \$40.00 if you camp), limit 40 persons. Contact Scott Thornton, Unocal International, 1201 W. 5th Street Room 308, os Angeles, CA 90017.

Professor Martin Stout, Dotty Steller, and Larry Cann, have all returned from the Fourth International conference and Field Workshop on Landslides sponsored by the Japan Landslide Society. Maybe we can talk them into giving us a slide show.

Engineering Geology Abstracts: \$20.00 (\$16.50 if member of CGS AEG IAEG GSA), send to Kay Yost, American Geological Institute, 4220 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22302; 703-379-2480.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Grouting Manager -- Grouting contractor needs an engineer or a geologist with 5+ years of contracting/grouting experience to head an office in Southern California. An aggressive individual with marketing capabilities is required. Salary commensurate with experience. Send resume including salary history to H.R. Al-Alusi, Pressure Grout Company, 125 South Linden Avenue, South San Francisco, CA 94080

County Ruled Liable for Slide Damage at Malibu

By JACK JONES, Times Staff Writer

In a case that could set the pattern for more than 200 others and cost the taxpayers as much as \$500 million, a judge ruled Friday that Los Angeles County should pay damages to a couple whose \$2.3-million home was destroyed in a massive 1983 landslide at Malibu's Big Rock Mesa.

Margaret and August Hansch filed one of the 230 suits lodged against the county and several public agencies on the grounds that an ancient landslide was reactivated by a rise in the water table as the result of a drainage system and seepage pits that the county helped plan and approved.

Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Jack T. Ryburn agreed with the couple, finding after a 2½-month trial that the county was "in the best position to assess the risk involved" in developing the mesa with seepage pits, rather than sewers, and "it must now bear the loss when damage occurs."

Because of the slide, which involved 150 to 250 acres, 30 homes have been condemned by the county as unsafe, and nearly 200 others sustained some damage. Values of homes, damaged or not, have plunged.

Total liability in all the suits has been estimated at anywhere from \$200 million to—in the view of county Supervisor Deane Dana—"as high as \$500 million."

Having declared that the county is liable for damages in the Hansch case, Ryburn set Oct. 15 for opening of the jury phase of the case to determine exactly how much the couple should receive.

Their suit sought \$2.3 million for the house built only three years before it was destroyed in September, 1983, and an unspecified

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amount for emotional distress.

The judge ruled, however, that the Los Angeles County Flood Control District, one of the agencies being sued, was not liable, because the streets and drains it installed actually resulted in less water on the mesa "and were not a substantial contributing cause" of the damage.

Earlier, Ryburn dismissed the cases against two other defendants, Waterworks District 29 and the state Department of Transportation. The homeowners claimed that leaks in the waterworks system and Caltrans cuts in the hillside contributed to the slide.

It was not immediately clear Friday whether the decision meant plaintiffs in the other suits will have to establish county liability individually or may now proceed more or less directly to the point of determining how much the county must pay them.

Attorney Richard Norton, who represents the Hansches, as well as 50 other Big Rock Mesa families, said he believes that under an established legal doctrine, the county will not be able to retry the issue of its liability once it has been established in a like case.

Norton said it is "improbable" that the other plaintiffs will have to go through the same procedure. He called the Hansch suit the "test case."

William Vaughn, the O'Meiveny & Myers attorney defending the county in the welter of suits, was

not available to comment on the point or to say whether an appeal was planned. His office said he was in a meeting Friday night.

Attorney Kenneth Chiate, who represents 160 families who filed suit, also was not reachable.

Ralph Saltsman, one of the Big Rock Mesa homeowners and an attorney, agreed with Norton.

"I think there is a precedent set . . . that will ultimately lead to a finding of liability," he said. "I think there's a possibility the county will now be precluded from saying they're not liable."

In any event, Saltsman suggested, "the time period for the other homeowners could be cut from six months to a day and a half."

When the trial began in mid-July, Norton contended that the county had known since the early 1960s that the mesa was the site of an ancient landslide but nevertheless, approved residential development with seepage pits for the next 20 years.

He produced reports from 1961 and 1962 that mapped the slide and predicted that increased ground water could trigger renewed ground movement.

In 1973, Norton told the court, a county study showed that the mesa's water table had risen to 200 feet, but the county took no action to lower the level. He said four horizontal drains the community

was required to maintain for the entire mesa were inadequate to drain the water.

He said then, "Instead of solving the ground water problem, the county turned (it) over to the homeowners."

The judge said he was finding for the Hansches under the legal concept of inverse condemnation, which "stems from the constitutional mandate that private property shall not be taken or damaged for public use without just compensation."

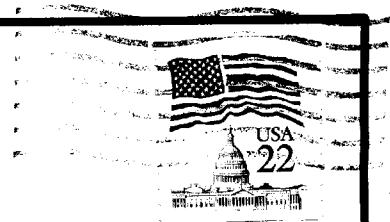
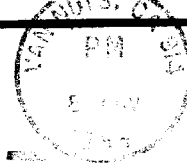
The county, Ryburn said, approved the (inadequate) drainage system for Big Rock Mesa, "but now contends that it did not accept the drains so they are not a public work. However, the drains were impliedly, if not expressly, accepted."

Saltsman said the inverse condemnation ruling means the plaintiffs will be able to collect up to one-third of the damage amount as additional reimbursement for attorneys' fees and costs.


It was not known Friday whether the county still intends to go ahead with countersuits against 300 past and present owners, developers and architects on the basis of its contention that they are actually responsible for the slide.

Times staff writer Lyndon Stambler contributed to this article.

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